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THE CENTRAL PROJECT OFFICE IN THE AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SERVICE

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Its Functions and Facilities

Agricultural Research Service

United States Department of Agriculture

FOREWORD

This bulletin was prepared by the staff of the Central Project Office for persons interested in learning how the Office operates to promote coordination and exchange of information in the field of agricultural research.[1a] While the Office functions within the framework of the Department's Uniform Project System, this is not an authoritative statement on all aspects of that system. Section 2, Chapter 3, Title 6, of the Department Administrative Regulations, entitled, "The Uniform Project System and Its Place in Planning," will provide additional information.

The Central Project Office has been officially designated as a central repository for all Department projects dealing specifically with research, marketing service, and statistical activities. Discussion in this bulletin, however, has been limited to those operations involving research.

[1a] Charles N. Lane, Assistant Head, was largely responsible for preparation of this report, assisted by Martha J. Seymour, Project Information, Andrew F. Freeman, Project Reviews, and Neil W. Johnson, Head, Central Project Office.

THE CENTRAL PROJECT OFFICE
IN THE
AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SERVICE

ITS FUNCTIONS AND FACILITIES

OUTLINE OF FUNCTIONS

The Central Project Office was established in 1948 to implement and facilitate the effective coordination of agricultural research throughout the Department.[1] It assists in obtaining a well integrated research program by acting as a control center in the review and approval of research proposals. It also provides an informative reference file of the approved projects. Analyses of the Department's research program are conducted as an aid to effective administration.

The Office, for purposes of greatest utility and convenience, is attached to the Office of the Administrator, Agricultural Research Service, and is located in Room 334, Administration Building, United States Department of Agriculture. The Department-wide nature of its facilities and services has been recognized in the establishment of a committee to determine its operating policies. This committee is composed of the Administrator, Agricultural Research Service, chairman; Administrator, Agricultural Marketing Service; and the Director of Finance. Work proposed or under way is described on forms provided for use throughout the Department, and records of more than 3,000 active projects in the Central Project Office are readily available for reference by Federal and State agricultural research workers and for administrative use.[2]

[1] It had been functioning since 1945 as a project record and reference unit limited to the physical and biological research of the Agricultural Research Administration.

[2] The files of the Central Project Office contain only records of projects for which the Department is directly responsible or to which it is making a substantial contribution. Comparable records of agricultural research conducted by State Agricultural Experiment Stations are maintained in Room 438, Administration Building, by the State Agricultural Experiment Stations Division of the Agricultural Research Service. This file of more than 13,000 projects, currently embraces about 5,000 supported by Federal-Grant funds and about 8,000 supported by non-federal funds and voluntarily supplied by the States.

The Federal-Grant fund projects are available for reference on the same basis as projects originating in the Department. General information on projects supported by non-federal funds will be supplied by application to appropriate members of the State Experiment Stations Division staff. Details of such research may be obtained by direct contact with the State Agricultural Experiment Station concerned.

The principal functions of the Central Project Office are briefly as follows:

I. Safeguards against duplication of effort through project control.

Serves as a control center in the operation of the Department's Uniform Project System as it relates to coordination of research activities. Significant features of the uniform system applicable to Central Project office operations are:

A. Provides uniform forms used by all Departmental agencies for describing their research activities.

B. Provides for instruction, review and improvement in use of forms.

C. Provides a system for coordinative review and approval of all work before it starts.

D. Provides for annual reports of progress on projects.

E. Provides for periodic review and reappraisal of work under way.

II. Provides a central source of information on what the Department is doing in agricultural research.

A. Maintains for use of research workers and administrators a central file and continuing inventory of current work.

B. Answers inquiries from individual research workers, study groups, advisory committees, Congress, and the public at large.

III. Conducts studies on ways and means of improving our research program.

A. Describes our current program and relates it to that of the State Agricultural Experiment Stations.

B. Makes special studies of selected segments of the research program as requested.

C. Studies present research emphasis in relation to long time needs for agricultural products.

THE UNIFORM PROJECT SYSYEM - NATURE AND PURPOSE

The Uniform Project System of the Department of Agriculture is a means whereby the broad and often multiple work objectives financed by each appropriation item in the Department budget are divided and subdivided into smaller work units, or projects, in order that specific program objectives may be more easily identified, segregated, and described, and their relationships one to the other more readily recognized. In descending order of scope, the activities under each appropriation item are classified into financial, work, and line projects, each of which is described below.

1. *Financial Project.* The financial project represents the first unit in the classification of work under an appropriation item. It reflects a broad activity aimed at the solution of related problems within a defined field, embracing one or more objectives of the appropriation item and so conceived as to make financial accountability possible.

2. *Work Project.* The work project represents the second unit documented in the classification of work under an appropriation item. It reflects a well-defined, continuing activity within the framework of the parent financial project.

3. *Line Project.* The line project is the third unit documented in the classification of work under an appropriation item. It reflects a specific segment of a work project that is limited in the scope of its objective, and usually, in length of time required for completion. The active line projects under a given work project collectively constitute the current program of work under the work project.

The standard forms for documentation of projects of each type are shown on pages 10 to 14, inclusive.

As an illustration of the relationships between financial, work, and line projects the following current[3] example taken from the research appropriation to the Agricultural Research Service is cited:

Financial Project - Livestock Research (one of six financial projects covering research in the Agricultural Research Service)

Work Project - Breeding Research to Improve Dairy Cattle (one of 47 work projects under Livestock Research)

Line Project - Studies of the Inheritance of Certain Production and Physical Characteristics by Cross Breeding the Red Danish Breed with Domestic Cattle (one of 18 active line projects under Breeding Research to Improve Dairy Cattle)

[3] As of March 1956.

Projects developed and approved under the Uniform Project System form the foundation of the Department's budget structure. Under present budgetary practice financial projects are the units in which program activities are presented. Budget justifications are generally written in terms of such projects. Narrative statements in support of the Budget draw heavily on financial and work project descriptions in presenting an informative summary statement of agency programs. The financial project is also the basis on which the various agencies do their accounting. While funds allotted to a financial project are allocated to its component work projects there is no provision for detailed accounting at this level. There is, however, the obligation to provide annual estimates of the approximate distribution of funds to each work project. In short, financial and work projects become the planning units in terms of which both the budgetary needs and the program objectives of an agency are expressed. The more limited and specific line project, on the other hand, furnishes an essential additional tool for those primarily concerned with the effective coordination and improvement of the content of research programs.

OPERATION AS A CONTROL CENTER IN RESEARCH COORDINATION

Project descriptions, written according to uniform instructions, not only provide a complete documentation of current research activities, but they also furnish an essential basis for continuing administrative control over a dynamic program. When an agency wishes to initiate a new undertaking or to modify an existing one, it submits a new or revised project description to the Central Project Office which then refers the proposal to appropriate agencies and officials for approval. Proposals to discontinue projects are also implemented by use of standard forms (See pages 13 and 14) which are submitted to the Project Office for appropriate action.

Proposals to initiate, modify, or discontinue *financial* projects are signed, as recommending, by the Administrator of the agency involved, after signature by any subordinate official he specifies. They are signed, as concurring, by the Director of Finance and, where necessary, by an official with Department-wide coordination responsibilities in the area of work involved. They are approved by the appropriate Assistant Secretary of Agriculture.[4]

Proposals to initiate, modify, or discontinue *work* projects are signed, as recommending, by appropriate officials within the agency involved. They are signed, as approving, by the Administrator of the agency, and where appropriate, by an official with Department-wide coordination responsibilities in the area of work described. They are concurred in by the Director of Finance. Prior to their approval, proposals to initiate or modify work projects are subject to review by other agencies with related interests and responsibilities.

[4]With the exception that discontinuances of financial projects are approved by the Director of Finance.

Proposals to initiate or revise research *line* projects are made by preparing line project descriptions and submitting them to the Project Office. There, the descriptions are reviewed for compliance with the official instructions for their preparation. After this examination, the proposals are routed for review to all Department agencies having related interests and responsibilities.[5] Reviewing agencies are given three weeks in which to make comments or suggestions. Written memoranda, outlining the need for joint participation in the proposed undertaking, advancing evidence of apparent duplication of effort, or otherwise suggesting modification of a proposal, are transmitted to the proposing agency via the Project Office. Reviewing and proposing agencies are expected to reconcile any questions that may thus arise. Provision for settlement of problem cases by appropriate officials is made as needed. When all parties concerned are satisfied with the adjustments made, and the Central Project Office has verified that there has been a satisfactory settlement of all questions raised by reviewing agencies, the proposed project is approved by a designated official of the originating agency. Thus the proposed work is formally initiated and the project description incorporated into the Central Project files.

Proposals to discontinue a line project, whether because of completion, suspension, or abandonment of the work, are approved at the same level of administration as the original project proposal. They are not, however, subject to review by other agencies.

Those responsible for the review and approval of new line projects and of revisions have been directed to emphasize the following considerations:

1. that the research objectives and plans for work are sound,

2. that the research is needed in the national interest and in line with broad program objectives,

3. that adequate personnel and facilities are available for prosecution of the project,

4. that the project is appropriately integrated with other research in the Department, and provision made, as needed for joint or cooperative effort in carrying out the proposal,

5. that the project, in the light of the best available information, does not duplicate work of other Department agencies, or of other Federal, State, or private agencies.

Shortly before a line project reaches its estimated date of completion and in any event before it has been in force five years, the

[5] All line project proposals are also referred to the State Experiment Stations Division of the Agricultural Research Service, whose specialists examine them from the standpoint of proper integration with related research in the State Agricultural Experiment Stations.

Project Office advises the responsible agency of the need for its reappraisal. One of the following actions is then required:

1. *Discontinuance.* If continuation of work under the project is not contemplated, a notice of discontinuance is submitted to the Central Project Office on Form AD-157 (see page 14).

2. *Extension.* Extension of a line project may be requested on Form AD-157 in cases where the period of extension will not prolong the life of the project beyond five years from the date of approval of the current project description.

3. *Reauthorization.* If continuation of the work under line projects that have been in force five years is contemplated, a revised project description that reflects current planning must be submitted. This is subject to the same referral and approval procedures as new line project proposals.

In this way the Central Project Files are kept continually current, and there is continuing administrative control of work in progress.

Continuing review of the Department's research program is also facilitated by the preparation and circulation of work project annual reports. These reports are prepared in accordance with official instructions and contain a statement for each of the subordinate line projects on which significant progress has been made. Work project annual reports are approved by designated officials, and several copies are placed on file in the Project Office for general reference. In addition, Branch Chiefs and Research Directors indicate annually to the Central Project Office any reports of other Departmental research groups that they desire to review. These requests are transmitted to the research groups concerned who then supply the Central Project Office with sufficient copies to meet these needs.

OPERATION AS A SOURCE OF INFORMATION ON CURRENT RESEARCH

Principal files. Four principal files are maintained by the Project Office for informational purposes. The first of these is the primary project file which contains copies of descriptions of all financial, work, and line projects covering research activities; also included are copies of approved requests for discontinuances and extensions of projects. Project descriptions affected by actions such as revision or discontinuance are stamped with appropriate notations so that their status is immediately evident. The primary arrangement of these files is by agency, and within the agency, the arrangement is in accord with the financial, work, and line project relationship.

Paralleling the primary project file is the master file of projects arranged by agencies. This visible-type file contains a 5 x 8 inch card for each financial, work, or line project involving research. The cards

for financial and work projects indicate the number and title of each project, while the cards for line projects carry a mimeographed abstract of the official project description (see figure 1, below).

APH (Poultry Research Section) APH e2-9

Title: Effect of pelleting of poultry feeds upon the performance of growing and laying chickens and turkeys.

Object: To determine merits, and practical applications of pelleted diets for poultry. To evaluate the effect of pelleting upon utilization of feeds, palatability, and overall nutritional performance.

Plan of Work: Attention will be given to the physical form and chemical composition of the feedstuff from the standpoint of fineness of grind, dustiness, moisture and fiber content, the presence of palatable or unpalatable materials and conservation of unstable nutrients. Feeding trials will involve both non-pelleted and pelleted feed of the same formula. Emphasis will be placed on the effect of pelleting feeds varying in fiber content, density and content of unpalatable ingredients on rate and efficiency of growth of chicks, and level and efficiency of egg production and maintenance of body weight of hens. Attention will also be given to the effect of pelleting on utilization of feed.

Cooperation: None shown.

Leaders: C. A. Denton, R. J. Lillie and J. R. Sizemore-Beltsville, Md.

Location: Beltsville, Md.

Approved: 2/18/53
Est. completion date: 2/56

APH e2-9 EFFECTS OF PELLETED FEEDS ON POULTRY GROWTH AND LAYING

FIGURE 1. The 5 x 8 inch abstract card carries sufficient information to indicate the most important features of a line project. Further detail is available from the full project description which is also on file in the Central Project Office.

The third important informational file is the subject-matter file of line projects, which is designed to facilitate the finding of all current research activities on a particular subject. This file contains additional copies on 5 x 8 inch cards of the same abstracts of active line projects mentioned above. These are mimeographed immediately after line project descriptions have been approved and a copy is placed under each relevant subject-matter heading. The subject-matter system is basically an alphabetical listing of object names and functional terms developed to cover all important aspects of agricultural research.

In a typical case, the card for one line project would be found in several places in the subject-matter file. For example, a project concerned with methods of controlling the mosaic disease of tobacco would be found under Tobacco - Pathology, Pathology being a subhead. The same project would also be found under Virus Diseases - Plant, since the disease is caused by a virus. If it were concerned with control of the disease through the breeding of resistant varieties of the plant, the project would also be shown under a third heading, namely, Tobacco - Breeding. Sometimes abstract cards are placed in as many as ten different places in the file so that all important aspects may be readily traceable. Subject-matter filing brings together all related research in the Department regardless of the agency conducting it. Frequently as many as half a dozen research groups are working on different aspects of the same broad problem.

The cards which constitute the subject-matter file are carried in flat-drawer cabinets which make them easy to scan.

The fourth informational file maintained by the Project Office is the work project annual report file, which contains the reports for the most recent five years on all work projects involving research. These are arranged according to agency and financial project relationships.

Use of the Central Project files. The Central Project files are designed for direct reference by interested persons. Department research workers are urged to consult them freely as a primary means of coordinating research effort throughout the Department.

Information from the files is also made available through written reports prepared in the Project Office. Such reports serve to make file material available to those who are not in a position to consult them directly. They may cover two or three projects in a very specialized field of research or a large area of activity involving many projects. Likewise, they may vary in character from a simple listing of projects with a two or three line description of each to carefully integrated summaries.

Information in the Central Project files is fully accessible to all Department personnel, to members of Congress, and to research workers in other Federal agencies and in the State Agricultural Experiment Stations Such persons may be requested to seek the permission of the agencies directly responsible for the activities involved if widespread dissemination of information is contemplated.

Members of the press and others appearing in person to obtain information on the nature of current Department research efforts are referred to officials of the agencies directly concerned who are in a position to determine the amount and kinds of information available for release. Inquiries from the public at large are also answered by written reports prepared by the Project Office with the advice and guidance of the agencies directly concerned.

OPERATIONS IN PROGRAM ANALYSIS

Using the records on file in the Project Office as a basic source of information and working with other units in the Office of the Administrator, Agricultural Research Service, and with the research branches of the Department, the Central Project Office develops analyses that are useful in improving the Department's research program. Illustrative of these is the special project of a continuing nature entitled, "Appraisal of Production Needs and Accomplishments as a Guide to Research Programming." Its purpose is to explore more fully the whole problem of our long term needs for food and fiber, and the relation of our research programs to obtaining the various kinds of agricultural products in the amounts and at the time they may be needed. It involves close cooperation with many of the Department's physical scientists and agricultural economists in (1) determination of the probable long term needs, (2) study of alternative means of supplying our needs, (3) examining our present rate of agricultural output, (4) appraising our capacity to meet short term and long term needs, and (5) suggesting areas in which additional research appears to be needed to keep pace with the nation's expanding and changing needs.

A second illustration is that of developing in cooperation with the State Agricultural Experiment Stations a functional analysis of Federal and State research programs in terms of the relative emphasis being given to various categories of production, utilization, and marketing research. The investment in each type of research is reported annually making possible periodic reassessment of developing trends.

In addition, special studies of selected segments of the research program or other short term analyses are made from time to time for the Research Administrator.

AD-144
REV. 9/54

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FINANCIAL PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. NO.

2. AGENCY AND UNITS

3. FINANCIAL PROJECT TITLE

4. APPROPRIATION AND SUBAPPROPRIATION

5. GENERAL PURPOSE AND CHARACTER OF PRINCIPAL FIELDS OF WORK

BINDING MARGIN

6. SIGNATURES	TITLE	DATE
RECOMMENDED		
CONCURRED		
APPROVED		

AD-145
REV. 9/54

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
WORK PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. NO.

2. AGENCY AND UNITS

3. WORK PROJECT TITLE

4. FINANCIAL PROJECT TITLE

5. LOCATION

6. GENERAL PURPOSE AND CHARACTER OF WORK;

7. WORKING RELATIONS WITH OTHER AGENCIES

BINDING MARGIN

8. SIGNATURES	TITLE	DATE
RECOMMENDED		
APPROVED		
CONCURRED	*Director of Finance*	

AD-149
REV. 9/54

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

LINE PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. NO.

2. SERVICE AND UNITS

3. LINE PROJECT TITLE

4. WORK PROJECT TITLE

5. PROJECT LEADER AND ADDRESS

6. LOCATION OF WORK

7. ESTIMATED DURATION

8. OBJECTIVE; 9. JUSTIFICATION; 10. PLAN OF WORK; 11. COOPERATION.

BINDING MARGIN

12. SIGNATURES	TITLE	DATE
RECOMMENDED		
APPROVED		

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(REV. 1/56)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

FINANCIAL OR WORK PROJECT DISCONTINUANCE

1. NO.

2. AGENCY AND UNITS

3. WORK PROJECT TITLE (IF APPLICABLE)

4. FINANCIAL PROJECT TITLE .

5. APPROPRIATION AND SUBAPPROPRIATION

6. REASONS FOR DISCONTINUANCE

BINDING MARGIN

7. SIGNATURES	TITLE	DATE
RECOMMENDED		
APPROVED		
CONCURRED/APPROVED	*Director of Finance*	

AD-157
1/56

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

LINE PROJECT DISCONTINUANCE OR EXTENSION

1. NO.

2. SERVICE AND UNITS

3. PROJECT TITLE

4. TYPE OF ACTION

☐ DISCONTINUANCE FOR FOLLOWING REASONS:

☐ PROJECT COMPLETED ☐ APPLICATION OF FUNDS, PERSONNEL, OR FACILITIES TO HIGHER PRIORITY WORK ☐ FURTHER INVESTIGATION NOT WARRANTED

☐ OTHER - EXPLAIN:

☐ EXTENSION OF TIME TO (NEW ESTIMATED DATE OF COMPLETION): _____

5. BRIEF SUMMARY OF PRINCIPAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS, INCLUDING PUBLICATIONS (FOR DISCONTINUANCES); OR REASON FOR EXTENSION OF TIME (FOR EXTENSIONS)

BINDING MARGIN

6. SIGNATURES	TITLE	DATE
RECOMMENDED		
APPROVED		